

**MINUTES OF THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**June 21, 2002  
9:00 AM**

**Present:** Appointed Members: Terry Hankner, Jacquelyn McCray, Donald Mooney, Pete Witte; Administration: Acting Deputy City Manager Tim Riordan; Council Representative: Jim Tarbell; City Planning Staff: Director Liz Blume and Steven Kurtz, Administrator, Land Use Management

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Don Mooney.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the June 7, 2002, City Planning Commission (CPC) meeting were presented for consideration.

**Motion:** Ms. McCray moved approval of the minutes, as presented.  
**Second:** Ms. Hankner  
**Vote:** All ayes (5-0).

**CONSENT ITEMS**

**Ordinance Authorizing a Lease with the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority for the Riverfront Way Transit Center in Downtown**

The City of Cincinnati built the Riverfront Way Transit Center, with federal and state funds obtained by Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA), as part of the Fort Washington Way project. The Transit Center runs from Central Avenue to Broadway beneath the recently constructed Second Street, and will provide space for dropping off and picking up bus passengers for events at the stadium, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and major riverfront events such as Riverfest. In addition, the Transit Center has been constructed to accommodate future light rail facilities and commuter rail facilities, with certain modifications.

The City of Cincinnati owns the property upon which the Transit Center was built. This lease places with SORTA the responsibility to assume primary responsibility for the Transit Center upon completion of the structure, while the City maintains the superstructure. SORTA will be responsible for all routine maintenance and the operating costs of the Transit Center. SORTA will receive all income generated by

the Transit Center. Should the income be inadequate to cover operating expenses, the City will reimburse SORTA for any annual deficit. The lease term runs until December 31, 2005 (or one year after the opening of the Freedom Center). At the end of the lease period, a history of income and expenses will have been established. At that time, it is expected that the City and SORTA will negotiate a long-term lease.

### **Ordinance Granting Numerous Permanent Easements on City-owned "Lot A" in Downtown**

The City of Cincinnati is the owner of real property commonly referred to as Lot "A". Under the City and County Agreement for the Redevelopment of the Central Riverfront, and as further detailed in Third Amendment to the Supplemental Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the County, the City agreed to lease to the County Lot "A".

The City and County entered into a Lease Agreement for Lot "A" for the purpose of operating a parking lot, subject to a number of easements. These easements are needed because the rebuilding of Fort Washington Way has necessitated or facilitated the construction, relocation, or reconstruction of these utilities. The utility installations were paid through permit fees, are in favor of other governmental entities, or were necessitated by the rebuilding of Fort Washington Way; therefore, no monetary consideration will be charged for the easements.

### **Ordinance Authorizing the Sale of Surplus City-Owned Property Located at 1660 Carll Street in North Fairmount**

The City of Cincinnati's Recreation Commission recently relocated its North Fairmount Recreation Center from 1660 Carll Street and closed the facility. The Recreation Commission and the City's Real Estate Division have recommended selling the property, and have been in negotiations with three interested parties regarding the site. As a result, the North Fairmount Community Center Inc. offered to purchase the property at its fair market value of \$28,000. On January 15, 2002, the Cincinnati Recreation Commission passed a resolution authorizing the sale. The property will be converted into a neighborhood youth cultural center, which will teach art, music, dance and offer photography lessons.

### **Ordinance Authorizing the Sale of Surplus City-owned Property Located at 813 Beecher Street in Walnut Hills**

The Roark Learning Center, Inc., has petitioned the City to purchase the property located at 813 Beecher Street. Roark Learning Center is a day care and early childhood learning center operation on the property, which they currently lease from the City. They wish to purchase the property to be able to perform building

rehabilitation needed for the expansion of the Center. Roark has agreed to pay the City the fair market value of \$6,800 for the property.

**Application for a Demolition Permit for 3324 and 3338 Browning Avenue in IDC No. 56, Oakley North Urban Renewal Area**

On June 27, 2001, by ordinance the City Council established Interim Development Control (IDC) District No. 56 and the application review guidelines for that district. Permits for the demolition of existing structures are subject to review by the City Planning Commission (CPC). The buildings at 3324 and 3338 Browning Avenue were recently acquired by Vandercar Holdings, Inc., and are proposed for demolition. These properties are not part of the large commercial development or the Subdivision Improvement Plans recently approved by the Commission. The covenant the owner enters into requires maintenance of the lot until it is redeveloped.

**Resolution Declaring the Intent to Appropriate to Public Use Property Required for Improvement of Queen City Avenue in South Fairmount**

The State of Ohio authorized property acquisition in April 2002, and this resolution declares the City's intent to appropriate the property needed to widen and construct Queen City Avenue partially on a new alignment. The project requires the acquisition of 15 buildings; remaining property needed for the project has already been acquired.

The project will improve public safety by providing two standard-width lanes in each direction with left-turn lanes and eliminating the reversible lane. Queen City Avenue will be constructed with improved alignment. An existing section of Queen City Avenue will become a local street without through traffic. The length of the project is 3000 linear feet from White Street to Wyoming Avenue. The total project cost is estimated to be \$10,000,000.

**Ordinance Accepting a Sidewalk Easement from the Seven Hills School, Inc., in Madisonville**

The Seven Hills School is in the process of an extensive rehabilitation of its buildings on Red Bank Road. Because there is currently no public sidewalk abutting the campus of the school, school administration has requested permission to construct a public sidewalk to serve their students and visitors. Due to the topography of the site, it is not economically feasible to build the sidewalk completely within the right-of-way. Therefore, the school has offered to donate an easement to allow a portion of the public sidewalk to be built on their property. The Seven Hills School representatives have indicated that the school will construct and maintain the sidewalk at their cost.

**Ordinance Authorizing a Lease for a Parking Lot on the North Side of Ninth Street in the West End**

For approximately 20 years, the City has leased a 110-space parking lot located on the north side of Ninth Street between Central Avenue and Mound Street. These spaces are needed to fulfill parking obligations to tenants of Centennial II and to provide handicapped accessible parking spaces for City employees. The proposed agreement will allow the City to continue leasing the lot under a 2-year lease with five automatic 2-year renewal periods. The City will also be responsible for taxes, all necessary 'housekeeping', preventive maintenance and repairs.

**Motion:** Ms. Hankner moved approval of the consent items.

**Second:** Mr. McCray

**Vote:** Motion carried; 5-0.

**OVER-THE-RHINE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Action requested: Approve the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan, dated June 21, 2002.

Ms. Blume presented the staff report, stating that since September 2000, the City Planning Department has been diligently meeting with community stakeholders to develop the OTR Comprehensive Plan. This planning process was originally initiated based on a recommendation from the Urban Land Institute (ULI). In 1997, the City contracted with ULI to examine the potential development opportunities in the OTR community. One of the recommendations that resulted from that process was "that a coalition organization, which can serve as an 'honest broker' between diverse neighborhood factions and build consensus for planned improvements be established." Following this recommendation, a group of volunteers worked to establish the OTR Coalition. The Coalition opened an office, recruited stakeholders, provided resident training and began to put together a planning process. The City Planning Department provided further assistance to the process and broadened the planning partnership to include the OTR and Pendleton Community Councils, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Residents' Table and others. A Steering Committee was ultimately established to oversee the process in October, 2000.

The Planning Steering Committee (PSC) was established through an agreement between the Coalition, the Community Council and the Residents Table as the most appropriate and representative groups in the neighborhood. The PSC consisted of representatives from the OTR Coalition, Community Council, Housing Network, Resident's Table, businesses, social service agencies, institutions, and residents. This 27-member committee was charged with monitoring the planning process, being actively involved in the issue committees, and soliciting volunteers and community input.

In addition to the PSC, there were four issue committees that worked to develop recommendations. The committees were the Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, and Quality of Life Committees. Membership was open to anyone who was interested. These committees, chaired by members of the PSC, discussed their issues in great detail. They heard from experts in various fields, as well as neighborhood and city representatives on current projects and future plans. In addition, they shared ideas for change and improvements, identified issues relating to their topics and developed goals and strategies to address those issues.

A unique aspect of this planning process was the community visioning process, which was designed to discuss and create the physical and design recommendations that accompany the policy recommendations

The process included daylong charettes on several Saturdays where participants toured the neighborhood together, looking at the area from their own and each other's perspective. After that activity, people attended additional Saturday sessions to create the concepts for each of the target areas identified in the issue committees. Participants worked with a team of designers who then translated their ideas into the many urban design solutions that are presented throughout the plan document. Over 100 community stakeholders participated in this portion of the process, which was designed and facilitated by Kenneth Cunningham and Associates, with the UC Community Design Center and Olika Design.

The overarching issues of the OTR neighborhood are:

- The need for quality housing options for all income levels
- How to introduce higher income residents to the neighborhood without displacing or diminishing the quality of life of current residents
- The need to stimulate business development and create job opportunities for residents
- The need to eliminate crime, improve the perception of safety in the neighborhood and improve community-police relations
- How to encourage both old and new residents to respect each other and form one diverse community

The plan is based on goals and strategies for each of the four issue areas - Housing, Economic Development, Transportation and Quality of Life. Recommendations include:

### *Housing*

Creation of a more balanced mixed-income community by stimulating the market at all price points. This is controlled by monitoring the number of units at each price point. Emphasis is placed on: giving priority to mixed-income projects; increasing homeownership opportunities while maintaining the current number of rental units, and converting smaller units into larger,

three-to-four bedroom “family sized” units, especially near Washington Park School, Rothenberg School and Findlay Market.

Phase One projects and implementers include:

- Pendleton Mews (OTR Foundation and Verdin)
- Melindy Square (Miami Purchase Preservation and Urban Sites)
- 1300 Vine Street (ReSTOC)
- Findlay Market Housing Rehabilitation (Scheer and Scheer)

### *Economic Development*

Creation of an environment that fosters new economic activity and supports existing activities. Strategies include the Vine Street Project, job development opportunities, entrepreneurial opportunities and increased home ownership.

Phase One projects include:

- Façade Improvement Program and Lead Remediation
- Neighborhood Pride Center on Vine Street
- Findlay Market – Market House Expansion and Public Improvements
- Findlay Market – Neighborhood Craft Market
- Empire Theatre Renovation
- 1700 Block of Vine Street Target Renovations
- Streetscape and Parking Enhancements on Vine Street

### *Transportation*

Facilitation of a neighborhood circulation system and the improvement of access to destinations and movement through the neighborhood. The main strategies are to enhance the major arterials to accommodate multi-modal transportation systems and create more pedestrian-friendly local streets.

Phase One projects include:

- Construction of Parking Structure for SCPA/Music Hall complex
- Conducting Vine Street system analysis study

### *Quality of Life*

Creation of a desirable neighborhood based on excellent schools, parks, and recreational and cultural opportunities. The main strategy is to build on planned school and open space investments.

Phase One projects include:

- Rebuilding Washington Park Elementary School on a new site
- Site improvements at Hanna, Grant and Washington Parks
- Establishment of new Entrepreneurial High School
- Construction of new K-12 Arts School
- Relocation of Art Academy of Cincinnati from Mt. Adams to OTR

This plan went through several levels of administrative review. Planning staff worked with countless other departments to draft strategies and determine the feasibility of recommendations. Representatives from the Department of Community Development, the Department of Transportation and Engineering, the Department of Public Services, the Department of Buildings and Inspections, the Cincinnati Park Board, the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, the Office of Environmental Management and the Employment and Training Division played an essential role in the development of this plan. These staff members provided information about existing and future projects, attended public meetings and charrettes, participated on Issue Committees, and reviewed and suggested changes for the three drafts of the plan.

The three drafts were presented to all Department Directors, the City Manager and the Mayor; City Councilmembers and Planning Commissioners were briefed at intervals throughout the two-year process. Comments and recommendations made by these groups and others were incorporated into the final product.

The Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan conforms to the goals and policies of the Coordinated City Plan, Volume 2: Strategies for Comprehensive Land Use, 1980.

**-- Mr. Riordan entered the meeting. --**

The oral presentation was enhanced by computer-generated visual aids, as well as a number of maps and other print materials that were on display. Also, a number of Steering Committee members provided testimony: Ken Cunningham of Ken Cunningham & Associates described his role as a consultant. Debbie Mays and John Hauck, co-chairs of the Housing Subcommittee, spoke of the unique character of the neighborhood, the need for mixed income housing opportunities, as well as the need to teach people how to be homeowners and landlords. Darrick Dansby, chairman of the Economic Development Subcommittee, reviewed a number of projects that are already underway. Transportation Subcommittee chairman Walter Reinhaus talked about creating more pedestrian-friendly local streets. Quality of Life Subcommittee member Arlene Turner explained plans to create recreational activities for neighborhood youths and to improve the appearance of the area by creating and maintaining greenspaces.

Staff recommends approval.

Providing additional testimony were:

Walter Reinhaus (24 West McMicken, 45210) requested that his project (McMicken Place) be included in the list of projects that are called out in the Housing section of the draft Plan. He also questioned why the Citizens on Patrol program was not included in the Safety section, and stated that bicycle issues (specifically, a bike lane on Liberty Street) needed to be added to the Transportation section.

Bonnie Neumeier (10 West Fourteenth Street, 45210) testified regarding the passion, energy and commitment of residents for their community. She was dismayed regarding the late notice she received in regard to the press conference for the release of the draft Plan; she believes community residents and stakeholders should have received the draft Plan prior to its being released to CPC members and the media. Further, she is concerned about the housing grid that is contained in the draft Plan; she believes poor people will be pushed out of the neighborhood.

Mary Burke (220 East Clifton Avenue, 45210) stated that, even though she had been working on the Plan for more than two years, she 'feels no ownership in this Plan', due to not receiving the draft Plan until yesterday. She reiterated her commitment to providing new low-income housing opportunities within the neighborhood.

Frank Russell (3240 Hardisty Avenue, 45208), as a representative of UC, worked with the consultant and City staff to help bring the Plan document to fruition. Speaking as a member of the Cincinnati Park Board, he pledged that he would make certain the Park Board is involved in improving greenspaces and the tree canopy in the community.

**Motion:** Ms. Hankner moved approval of the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan, dated June 21, 2002.  
**Second:** Mr. Tarbell  
**Vote:** Motion was unanimously approved (6-0).

**Motion:** Following up on Mr. Mooney's suggestion, Ms. McCray moved that annual updates be prepared and presented to the CPC regarding implementation of the OTR Plan.  
**Second:** Ms. Hankner  
**Vote:** Motion carried; 6-0

## ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned.

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Elizabeth A. Blume, Director  
City Planning Department

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Donald J. Mooney, Chairman  
City Planning Commission

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_